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*The Cambridge History of English Literature.* Volumes XIII and XIV. *The Nineteenth Century*, II and III. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917.

After a full decade of conscientious work this truly monumental *History of English Literature* was brought to a close last year. Not only is it impossible within the limits of space here provided to attempt any general summary and estimate of the *History* as a whole, but these last two volumes must be considered in a more cursory fashion than the present writer did in the case of the two volumes that immediately preceded them. Otherwise he would be lost in the multitudinous detail of the work.

In a final note the editors contrast with their general plan the method of former generations of tacking on chapters on the history of literature to "the political history of the same divisions of time." They then continue:

"Equally unsatisfactory—any brilliant attempts to carry it out notwithstanding—is the other more seductive method of simply treating the course of a nation's literary history as an organic part of its political and social experiences, which accompanies their movement from stage to stage, as though it were a resultant of the same causes and subject to the same curves of progress or reaction."

The soundness of this observation is open to question. The writers had doubtless in mind the late Professor Courthope's *History of English Poetry*. Certainly the method there employed can be carried to an indefensible extreme, as in Courthope's chapter on the earlier eighteenth century, in which the effort is made to account for the characteristics of Augustan verse by the growth of the Whig Principle in politics and society. But the bonds between literature and various phases of society cannot be so disregarded as they are in these volumes. Genius is not always "above the age"; never less so than during the Victorian period. It is not very profitable to read of Tennyson's "effort to understand and sympathize with his own age," of Carlyle's "optimism, tossed fitfully on a vast ocean of pessimism," of Arnold's distinct utterance of "the cry of the *maladie du siècle*" and find nowhere any reasoned statement of just what influences, social, political, philosophic, scientific, went to the making of that unrest, that "strange disease of modern life," that gulf between the two worlds, "one dead the other powerless to be born," in which the nineteenth

century wandered. The meaning of the vogue of such a poem as Fitzgerald's version of Omar becomes clear only when it is interpreted in relation to current thought and is set alongside of the poetry of doubt (Arnold and Clough) and of despair (Thomson). Yet the *Rubaiyat* here finds place in the chapter that treats of the Rossettis, Morris, and Swinburne. Cory, too, should stand close to Arnold; *Mimnermus in Church* (which Saintsbury says is "a little overdosed with modernity") is the expression of that eternal conflict between dogmatic "otherworldliness" and the appeal of this world—a conflict that presented itself with peculiar force in the mid-last-century. But Cory is huddled by Saintsbury along with other lesser poets who chanced to be born in the same decade with him. The real appeal of all this poetry to all but those who depend solely upon "æsthetic" appreciation is that it quintessentializes for us the thoughts and feelings of religiously-minded people who were wistfully discarding the robes of dogma that could no longer shield them from the bleak winds of science. This the *Cambridge Literature* is far from making plain.

Because of the same lack of any stress upon contemporary thought the significance of "The Literature of Science" (a subject to which a chapter is devoted) is passed over. The page devoted to Sir Charles Lyell, for example, contains various titles and dates, but no indication of the large importance of *The Principles of Geology* in pressing forward the theory of uniformitarianism and thus helping the overthrow of the compromise between geology and *Genesis* that had been temporarily effected by the "catastrophic" theory of Cuvier. There is a bare hint of Lyell's relationship to Darwin, but the general subject of the growth of evolutionary theory before *The Origin of Species* is hardly suggested; to Robert Chambers three lines are devoted. An even more remarkable omission is the total neglect of anthropological investigations, especially in the field of the comparative history of religions; Tylor and Robertson Smith are not mentioned. The spirit of rationalism entered too deeply into the literature—and not only into the scientific and philosophic writings—of the era to be thus lightly set aside. Moreover, the development of science and of scientific writings is essentially a subject that transcends the boundaries of nationality; to treat of English writings in this field by themselves leaves each branch of the theme incomplete. Thus, there is no reference to the revolutionary discoveries and in some cases total

readjustment of our ideas of the cosmos that have proceeded from Kirchhoff's systematic development of spectrum analysis (1859). And it was impossible to present a survey that was representative even of English achievements without the inclusion of the names of illustrious men yet living.

Why should a history of literature omit all mention of living writers, as though the mere incident of death raised an author to a dignity to which, living, he was not entitled? It is only necessary to point to the analogy of political history to see how arbitrary is the distinction that divides the two worlds. Imagine a history of modern England with no reference to Mr. Asquith, or of France with no mention of "the Tiger," or of Germany without William II. The editors, assuming the risk of making invidious distinctions, should have included certain writers. Mr. Bennett or Mr. Wells could not have been offended had place been made for Mr. Hardy. For how can the history of the English novel in the nineteenth century be regarded as complete with no account of the Wessex Novels, in which artistically that division of our literature reaches perhaps its highest point? And what of essay and biography without Lord Morley, of history without Mr. Bury, of poetry without Mr. Bridges and Mr. Blunt (to cite only a few obvious and famous names)? When we come to the sketch of the drama the arrangement results in a chapter that serves merely as a historical introduction to the subject, with no reference to Jones, Pinero, and Shaw. As for "Anglo-Irish Literature," we rub our eyes and wonder. "Was *The Wanderings of Oisín* written nearly thirty years ago? Is there such a person as A. E.?" If inclusion in a history of literature is a wished consummation, how fortunate for Synge that he happened to die! And the arbitrary plan is not even followed consistently. The history of English philosophy would have been so manifestly incomplete without some discussion of Mr. Bradley's work that room has been found for him; and into the chapter on Prosody Mr. Saintsbury, with less obvious necessity, has admitted a brief reference to Mr. Bridges's investigations in that field.

The difficult problem of the arrangement of such bulky material has been in the main happily solved. How classify the crowd of lesser stars that have not yet sunk so far below the horizon as to be invisible from the editorial watch-tower? Sir Adolphus Ward continues his account of writers of history and biography from

former volumes, and deals weightily with the Political and Social Novel. To Professor Walker was assigned the arduous task of the chapter on "Critical and Miscellaneous Prose," in which the presence together of such men as Hannay and Stephen, Borrow and Pater, Doran and Hearn, and many more effect us, if not as though we looked in upon odd bed-fellows, at least as though we were visiting a hospital ward where comparatively humble persons, not able to afford a separate room, receive kindly but indiscriminate treatment. Not that Professor Walker does not employ ingenious devices for throwing his material (we drop, of course, the simile) into groups. No one who has attempted collegiate courses in modern prose can be ignorant of his immense difficulties; yet he might have avoided certain errors in proportion, especially in the case of Pater, who receives consideration utterly inadequate to his importance as an influence during the period 1880-1900. Professor Saintsbury is on the whole less successful in the chapter on "Lesser Poets" in which he discusses a full hundred writers and is weighed down (though characteristically he gives no sign of consciousness of being so weighed) by his materials. His curious chronological grouping (aside from a few comparatively famous names), not by decades in which the writers' chief books were published (for which something might be said) but by the decades in which the writers chanced to be born, results in a hodge-podge. Yet a simple logical classification was for the most part easily possible.

Oscar Wilde, the most discussed and the most famous writer of the last decade of the nineteenth century, is referred to in passing in various parts of the work but is given no adequate notice at all, probably because each of several contributors relied on a colleague to include him in his section of the work. Another extraordinary omission is that of J. C. Mangan (save his bare last name;—an account of Irish literature without *My Dark Rosaleen*!). Stephen Phillips (referred to in the bibliography to the drama only) and John Payne both died quite lately; but not too recently to be included in at least the bibliography of lesser poets.

To comment in detail on individual chapters is impossible within the limits of a review. By far the most interesting is Mr. Young's brilliant study of Meredith, Butler, and Gissing. The posthumous vogue of the latter two (though Meredith's vogue was almost posthumous) is illustrated by the amount of space correctly allotted to them. Mr. Young's summary of Meredith's teaching and his

outline of the connection between his novels and poetry is specially noteworthy, as is his discussion of Butler's views on evolution. Another excellent and authoritative chapter is Mr. Phillips's on "The Growth of Journalism." Mr. Rendall on "University Journalism" is less satisfactory. *Undergraduate Papers* to which Swinburne contributed and *The Eagle* to which Samuel Butler contributed should have been mentioned. Other excellent chapters are those on "Caricature and the Literature of Sport" and "The Literature of Travel." One questions the appropriateness of the inclusion as an appendix to the chapter on the Brontës of a "modern language note" on a possible source of *Jane Eyre*. Professor Warren evidently had difficulty in spinning out a chapter on "South African Poetry" and wastes valuable space in quotations from rather uninspired verse. A sketch of "Anglo-Indian Literature" minus Mr. Kipling is in the proverbial condition *manqué*. The writers on the greatest authors of the period—Carlyle, Tennyson, and the Brownings—had evidently little novel to say on their respective subjects. Professor Grierson is not able entirely to get rid of the tone of apology with which it has been fashionable to mention Tennyson. He discusses him sympathetically in so far as he is an artist, as a reproducer in verse of various moods and dreams. But he does not see in him the representative of his age. Professor Saintsbury contributes a lively chapter on Dickens, as usual rather bare of fact but stimulating and pleasant.

The bibliographies need considerable revision. Once more one notes the absence of any general bibliography, which results in such an absurdity as the inclusion of Professor Walker's *Literature of the Victorian Era* under Browning but not under Tennyson, Arnold, etc. From the authorities on Robert Browning I miss Berger's illuminating little study. To those on James Thomson, Mr. P. E. More's essay should be added. Among various striking *lacunae* in the Rossetti list note only H. C. Marillier's *D. G. Rossetti: An Illustrated Memorial*, 1899, which contains two hundred reproductions of his works. To the authorities on Morris add Pater's suppressed essay, *Æsthetic Poetry*. The bibliography of Swinburne is shockingly inaccurate. That to Fitzgerald does not include the seven-volume definitive edition of 1902, an almost incredible omission. The bibliography to the chapter on "Lesser Poets" contains many errors and there are numerous omissions, such as Austin's *Poetry of the Period*, the collected edition of Lionel

Johnson's poems, Francis Thompson's *Poems* of 1893, and Lee-Hamilton's *Mimma Bella*. The list of authorities on Ruskin lacks Harrison's *Life* and even Cook's *Life*! Under John Addington Symonds one finds no mention of Horatio Brown's *Life* of him. There is a similar *lacuna* in the bibliography of Shorthouse which lacks the *Life, Letters and Literary Remains*. To the bibliography of Gissing should be added Morley Roberts's *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*, which is a biography of Gissing under the thinnest of disguises.

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## CORRESPONDENCE

### WORDSWORTH'S KNOWLEDGE OF PLATO

Before writing upon Wordsworth's knowledge of Plato, Mr. Elliott A. White (*Mod. Lang. Notes*, xxxiii, pp. 246-248) should have consulted Lienemann, *Die Belesenheit von William Wordsworth*, Berlin, 1908 (pp. 213-4). Not only does Lienemann identify a larger number of direct references to Plato in the writings of Wordsworth, prose and verse, but he gives them more exactly. For the verse, however, my *Concordance to the Poems of William Wordsworth* (1911) should be of some assistance; see, for example, the quotations s. v. Academic, Academus, Form, Forms, Idea, Ideal. According to Mr. White, there are 'five specific places where Wordsworth mentions Plato in his poetry': *Prelude* 'I, 404'; *Prelude* 'VI, 294'; *Chiabrera* 'IX, 8'; *Dion* 'v, 9'; *Ecc. Sonn.* 'III, iv, 6.' (See the *Concordance* s. v. Plato, Platonic, Plato's.) These references should read: *Prelude* 9. 409; *Prelude* 6. 298; *Chiabrera* 9. 8; *Dion* 9; *Ecc. Sonn.* 3. 4. 4. If Mr. White's '*Dion*, v, 9' means *Dion*, verse 9, he has two references right out of five; if not, he has one. I have not tried to read proof for him after the fact, but have casually noted the following. J. A. Stewart does not call Wordsworth 'the Platonic poet *par excellence*'; he speaks of 'any one who takes Wordsworth as the Platonist Poet *par excellence*.' A. C. Bradley's *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, pp. 97-148, is wrongly cited as '*Oxford Lectures on English Poetry*, pp. 99-150.' The translation of Plato (1793) in Wordsworth's library was not by 'Thomas Tyler,' but by Thomas Taylor. And what shall we say of the next?

Mr. Shorthouse thinks it "not impossible" that Coleridge talked to Wordsworth about Plato, and cites Mr. Frederick Pollock as finding some traces of the conversations.' The allusion is to the well-known work of Sir Frederick Pollock on Spinoza, Shorthouse having written in 1881 (*Transactions of the Wordsworth Society*